



Morning Alert - Tuesday, October 10, 2017

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report on the launch of an H-2A rocket carrying the quasi-zenith Michibiki No. 4 satellite from the Tanegashima Space Center at 7:01 this morning. All commercial networks led with reports on the start of the official campaign for the Lower House election today.

No papers were published this morning due to a press holiday.

INTERNATIONAL

President Trump says “only one thing will work” in dealing with North Korea

All Monday papers reported that President Trump posted the following two tweets about North Korea on Saturday: “Presidents and their administrations have been talking to North Korea for 25 years, agreements made and massive amounts of money paid....” and “...hasn’t worked, agreements violated before the ink was dry, making fools of U.S. negotiators. Sorry, but only one thing will work!” The President did not elaborate, but Sankei speculated that he intended to put pressure on Pyongyang by indicating the possibility of military action.

North Korean leader vows to advance nuclear arms development

All Monday papers wrote that according to North Korea’s state-run news agency, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un stated during a plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea on Saturday that his country will maintain its policy of simultaneously developing the economy and nuclear weapons. Kim accused the United States of trying to “completely stifle the sovereignty, right to existence, and development” of his nation.

Russian lawmaker says DPRK plans to test missile capable of reaching U.S. West Coast

Saturday morning's Asahi wrote that the Russian news agency RIA Novosti reported that Russian lawmaker Anton Morozov said on Friday that North Korea is preparing to test a long-range missile which it believes is capable of reaching the West Coast of the United States based on its mathematical calculations. Morozov visited North Korea from Oct. 2-6 and held talks with senior DPRK officials and the Russian ambassador in Pyongyang.

Group of anti-nuclear NGOs wins Nobel Peace Prize

All Saturday papers reported extensively on the awarding of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) on Friday. Survivors of the atomic bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and anti-nuclear NGOs in Japan welcomed the news because ICAN played a key role in adopting the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in July. However, the papers expressed pessimism toward progress in international efforts to eliminate nuclear weapons, saying that key nuclear powers, including the U.S. and Russia, have shown little interest in the treaty.

Asahi wrote that the government of Japan, which is not a signatory to the treaty, did not issue an official statement on ICAN's achievement on Friday, speculating that the GOJ was reluctant to respond on account of Japan's dependence on the U.S. nuclear umbrella amid North Korea's nuclear and missile provocations. However, the paper wrote on Monday that MOFA released a spokesman's statement on Sunday on ICAN's achievement, saying that Japan welcomes the expanding consensus in the global community about the need for nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation. The statement also noted, though, that ICAN's activities differ from the approach taken by the Japanese government.

ECONOMY

U.S., Japan may discuss beef import safeguard, FTA at next economic dialogue

Saturday morning's Nikkei wrote that although Japan plans to stress cooperation with the U.S. in such sectors as energy and infrastructure development at the second round of the U.S.-Japan Economic Dialogue to be held on Oct. 16 by Vice President Pence and Vice Prime Minister Aso, Washington has been taking a tough position on Japan's safeguard measure on frozen U.S. beef imports and may call on Tokyo to conclude a bilateral FTA. The paper wrote that the dialogue will lay the groundwork for President Trump's planned visit to Japan in November. The paper quoted a GOJ source as saying that the Trump administration has called on Japan through working-level channels to immediately cancel the safeguard mechanism by saying that the White House will not be satisfied if the measure remains imposed. While saying that there are strong calls for a bilateral FTA with Japan from the Trump administration and Congress, the daily speculated that Washington may delay its FTA talks with Tokyo because it will probably be preoccupied with renegotiating NAFTA and the KORUS FTA.

Meanwhile, Sunday's Nikkei wrote that the GOJ is planning to present a proposal to the U.S. side on reviewing its safeguard mechanism. According to the paper, the GOJ checks the volume of imports once a month under the current system, but it is considering doing so more frequently in the view that more frequent checking would help Japanese importers to adjust the volume of their imports to levels that fall below the safeguard threshold.

Trade Minister Seko discusses Japan's oil interests with UAE official

Monday's Yomiuri wrote that Economic, Trade, and Industry Minister Seko held talks with Foreign Minister Abdullah of the United Arab Emirates in Abu Dhabi on Sunday. The paper wrote that Seko sought the UAE's cooperation in extending Japanese firms' contracts for oil field development in the Persian Gulf that are set to expire in March 2018. The paper wrote that whether Japan can maintain its oil interests in the region will have a significant impact on the nation's energy policy.

POLITICS

Party leaders engage in policy debates

All Sunday and Monday papers reported extensively on policy debates held between the leaders of the ruling and opposition parties ahead of the start on Tuesday of the official campaign for the Oct. 22 Lower House election. The leaders discussed on an Internet TV program and at the Japan National Press Club such issues as constitutional revision, the planned consumption tax hike, and nuclear energy. Prime Minister Abe proposed adding a new clause to the Constitution on the principle of civilian control over the SDF. The premier also stated that he will continue to stay in power if the ruling coalition wins a majority in the Lower House, which is 233 seats, in the election. Party of Hope leader Koike stated that she will decide which candidate to support for prime minister after the election. However, she did not rule out the possibility of forming a coalition with the LDP. The papers wrote that Abe defended his policies in response to opposition criticism and Koike failed to present concrete or detailed measures for her policy pledges.

When asked about the threat posed by North Korea during a debate on Sunday, Abe stated that North Korea apparently possesses nuclear arms, adding that this is the first time for Japan to be threatened by a nuclear power. Asahi wrote that the premier's statement runs counter to the GOJ's official position of not acknowledging the DPRK as a nuclear power.

Poll: 32% support LDP, 13% favor Party of Hope

Monday's Yomiuri front-paged the results of its nationwide poll conducted on Oct. 7-8, in which 32%, down 2 points from the previous survey on Sept. 28-29, of respondents said that they will vote for the LDP in the proportional representation segment of the Lower House election on Oct. 22, while 13%, down 6 points, chose the Party of Hope. Some 7% backed the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan. Concerning cabinet support, 41%, down 2 points, supported the Abe administration, while 46% did not. When asked whether they have high expectations for the Party of Hope, 36% said "yes"

while 58% said “no.” The paper wrote that the initial popularity of the new party led by Tokyo Governor Koike seems to be starting to fade and that opposition supporters are apparently split between the Party of Hope and the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan.

39% of LDP candidates would support U.S. military action against North Korea

Monday's Tokyo Shimbun reported on the results of a Kyodo News survey of candidates planning to run in the Oct. 22 general election. When asked whether they would support U.S. military action against North Korea in the event that the nuclear and missile issues could not be resolved peacefully despite the pressure being applied by the U.S. and Japanese governments, 39.6% of the LDP candidates said they would support it, while 20.5% said they would not. Some 77.5% of Nippon Ishin candidates said they would back U.S. military action. However, only 21.3% of candidates of the Party of Hope supported the idea, while 57.5% were against it. Among other parties, 57.1% of Komeito candidates, 99.2% of Japanese Communist Party candidates, and 85.2% of Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan candidates disagreed with the idea.

SECURITY

Suga inspects PAC-3 unit

Monday's Nikkei and Sankei wrote that Chief Cabinet Secretary Suga visited the Ministry of Defense on Sunday to inspect a PAC-3 unit deployed there. Suga told the members of the SDF unit that the nuclear and missile threat posed by North Korea today is at the highest level since WWII and that the GOJ is responsible for defending the lives of the Japanese people.

OKINAWA LOCAL PRESS

President Trump may visit Kadena

Monday's Okinawa Times reported from Washington that an idea is being considered within the USG for President Trump to visit Kadena AB during his stay in Japan on his way to Vietnam for the annual APEC leaders' meeting in early November. The article claimed that the President is considering visiting a U.S. military installation in Japan, possibly Kadena AB, in view of the heightened tension on the Korean Peninsula, quoting a White House source as saying: “Although there are time constraints, there are proponents of having the President visit Kadena in order to highlight the administration's hard line toward North Korea.” The source said Ambassador Hagerty and other Japan-based diplomats are currently studying possible locations for the President to visit while in Japan. The daily added that the Defense Department is cautious about the proposal, quoting a source close to Defense Secretary Mattis as saying: “A visit to Kadena by the President would be provocative.”

